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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the TV Reading Program in Philadelphia and Mount Vernon which encourages the development of auditory-vocal behaviors without preempting the English, social studies, or science curricula. The program in both districts fosters practice in expressing standard grammar orally. Teachers in the TV Reading Program work from prepared scripts, giving students precise definitions for the vocabulary found in the scripts. Students dramatize the scripts, reciting responses in unison. Although the initial development of a concept is at an abstract level, the verbal input is supported by concrete experience when the video portion of the TV tape is switched on. When concepts are not represented visually, teachers lead students to perceive the parameters of the concept through a questioning technique which requires students to affirm or negate the relationships of the new concept with familiar concepts. A pilot study of the impact of the program on the reading behavior of seventh graders encouraged the expansion of the program and the application for a federal grant to install an on-the-job training program for secondary teachers. (WR)

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DEVELOPING AUDITORY-VOCAL FUNCTIONING WITH TV TAPES AND SCRIPTS

Reading with Television
May 15, 1975
2:00 - 4:45 PM

We reading teachers have tried to solve the problem of having excessive numbers of students functioning below minimum competency (New York State identifies this level arbitrarily at the 23 %ile) by switching from a "Sight Method" for word identification to a Phonics Method." We assumed that if we could get our students to associate sounds with the squiggles they saw on the page, they would comprehend. All kinds of expensive equipment and materials were brought into our reading centers to help our charges learn "to crack the code" and to provide practice in comprehension exercises.

In spite of our efforts, although making significant gains while working with Reading Specialists, eighth-graders in remedial programs functioned thirty-two months below grade level at the end of the 1973-1974 year. This deficit contrasts greatly with deficits of our second and third-graders in remedial reading programs. For the past decade the phenomenon of "cumulative deficit" was observed also in our developmental reading programs. Problems associated with the deficit have seemed insurmountable; the explanations of the etiology varied according to the discipline of the analyst; the supply of specialists could not meet demands which increased in a geometric progression as successful academic functioning becomes more and more dependent on reading skills, i.e. at the upper elementary and secondary levels.

But energetic and creative people have a way of solving insurmountable problems. First, the etiology was identified in

studies of poor readers. It turns out that "the actual marks on the printed page are less important than the knowledge a skilled reader has before he even opens a book." (17,p.9) Second, Mr. Mike McAndrew and Mr. Bernard Solomon discovered a palatable way for taking the prescription -- commercial TV tapes and scripts. Our data indicates that commercial TV tapes and scripts can supply the means and the motivation for acquiring the knowledge necessary to read skillfully.

Investigation of poor readers -- inmates of a Federal Penitentiary (12), Black-American children (5), Mexican-American children (11), White-American children (9), using the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities -- pointed up performances in the auditory-vocal channel which were far below the norm when the task required subjects to:

1) decide whether the action of a sentence was congruent with the subject of a sentences. (Auditory Reception)
2) complete analogous relationships. (Auditory Association)
3) supply inflectional endings. (Grammatic Closure)

Poor readers were not able to approach the performance of the normative group when asked to retrieve and articulate appropriate responses to verbal stimuli although they matched the performance of the normative group at the less abstract level when the stimuli were pictured and they could point to their choices. (Visual Reception, Visual Association, Visual Closure)

Jansky and deHirsch, also, observed the inability of poor readers to retrieve stored verbal symbols and noted the importance of the ability to cope with grammatical units. (repeating sentences) in predicting reading success. (10)

It is a rather recent development that the reading problem has been identified with language problems. (It would be interesting to compare, topically, the subjects of state and national reading conventions over the last decade.) The relationship of the lexicon to successful reading has not been ignored by teachers of reading; it is the role of grammar which has not been fully understood. After studying Russian children, Vygotsky concluded "that our analysis clearly showed the study of grammar to be of paramount importance for the mental development of the child." (18,p.100)

"Grammar enables the listener or reader to guess about the input message based upon the redundancy mechanisms." (16,p.87)

A singular subject sets up a readiness for a verb with s.
A time marker sets up readiness for verb tense.
Dependent clauses set up readiness for independent clauses.
An adjective suggests the presence of a noun.
A noun followed by a verb establishes predictions that either an noun, noun phrase or adverb will follow.

Words (concepts) are not uttered or written in a random way. They are strung together according to rules. (19) The rules structure the order and function of words. They provide the "key to comprehending language." (17,p.38) It is knowledge of the structure which permits the listener- reader to focus attention on important informational elements. Because large numbers of our students have learned the rules of a different grammar (1), they have been forced to deal with the standard grammar at the cognitive level. They are not adept at utilizing the redundancy mechanisms of the standard grammar. For them the utilization of the redundancy mechanisms is a mediated rather than a spontaneous process. Incongruencies between the rules of two

language systems which share a similar lexicon inhibits efficient processing of inputs and forces the listener-reader to be unnecessarily dependent on the lexicon for meaning.

We have failed to recognize the debilitating nature of the deficits in receiving and expressing the standard grammar. It appears that deficiency in grammar even more than the lexicon may be responsible for the deficit which accumulates as children interact with our educational system. Traditionally as students have moved through the grades, student involvement has become increasingly passive. Teachers lecture. Students select responses on objective tests and look up the meanings of words in the dictionary. Experiences with the standard grammar have been limited, for the most part, to receptive rather than expressive experiences.

Unfortunately, a knowledge of the etiology of the reading problem is of little assistance to the concerned teachers who work with classes of thirty or more non-standard speaking students who cannot read the textbooks and are thus doomed to academic failure. These teachers need a prescription, and they need one that they can implement immediately. In Philadelphia and Mount Vernon, there is a prescription which, we believe, permits the development of auditory-vocal behaviors without preempting the English, social studies or science curricula -- TV Reading.

The TV Reading Program in both districts fosters practice in expressing, orally, the standard grammar; students dramatize

the scripts. The two programs differ, primarily in methods of instruction. The TV Reading Program, in Mount Vernon, incorporates some of the elements of an auditory-vocal model, which has influenced impressive changes in reading and language behaviors of K -- 2 children throughout the district and some third and sixth-graders. In schools representing high, middle and low socio-economic neighborhoods, we have observed: a 15.4% decrease in the number of sixth-graders below minimum competency; gains significant at the .001 level over a two year period in Verbal Intelligence; a 40% decrease in the number of third-graders below minimum competency. Children who were exposed to Distar Reading and Language in kindergarten began to write "explosively" about very sophisticated topics, using complex sentences in the first grade. Their interviews, research papers and stories are all the more impressive when demographic information is considered. For they live in a "blue collar" neighborhood and many of their parents are foreign born.

As in the Distar Program, students in the TV Reading Program recite responses in unison. Teachers work from prepared scripts, giving students precise definitions for the vocabulary they will meet when they read TV scripts. The initial development of a concept is at an abstract level. (It is verbalized.) But the verbal input is supported by a more concrete experience with the concept when the video portion of the TV tape is switched on. Examples of teacher presentations follow.

TEACHER: "In the segment of "Lucy Sublets the Office" which we watched yesterday, the production directions noted that Harry is gesturing while he is talking. Gesturing means motioning with the body instead of using words to help express an idea or feeling. What does gesturing mean?

STUDENTS: (In Chorus) Gesturing means motioning with the body instead of using words to help express an idea or feeling.

TEACHER: Does anyone recall how Gale Gordon gestured?
Let's look at the video tape again?
What idea or feeling did he express?
What part of his body did he use to make the gesture?
What word means motioning with the body instead of using words to help express an idea or feeling?

STUDENTS: Gesturing

TEACHER: Who can express an idea or feeling to the class without using words? Who can use a gesture to express an idea or feeling?

STUDENTS: (Demonstrate various gestures)

TEACHER: Elicits from the class the meanings of the demonstrated gestures.
Then asks - What does gesturing mean?

STUDENTS: (In Chorus) Gesturing means motioning with the body instead of using words to help express an idea or feeling.

When concepts are not represented visually (as often happens when they occur in the dialogue and not the production directions) teachers are asked to lead students to perceive the parameters of the concepts through a questioning technique which requires students to affirm or negate relationships of the new concept to "spontaneous concepts" (familiar concepts).

For example, Carter says "The records of the Unique Employment Agency are kept meticulously." The video portion of the TV tape does not provide a concrete experience with records which are kept meticulously. After the initial work in verbalizing the definition (in a way in which careful attention is paid to details) TV Teachers supply experiences at a concrete level, showing a sample of an arithmetic paper or a composition and asking:

Are all the numbers on Gail's paper easy to read?

Do you have to guess which column they belong in?

Did she pay careful attention to details?

Dis she work meticulously?

Did Fred form his letters in a way which showed he paid careful attention to details?

Did he keep the spaces even between the letters?

Did he keep the spaces even between the words?

Did he capitalize the first word in each sentence?

Did he indent when he began new paragraphs?

Did he put a punctuation mark at the end of each sentence?

What word would describe the way in which he worked?

He worked_____.

If the records of the Unique Employment Agency were kept meticulously, would:

you be able to read all the numbers?
would you know whether a number stood for one dollar or for ten dollars?
there be mistakes in addition?
words be misspelled?
the writing be sloppy?

Could you get an "A" in addition, subtraction, multiplication or division with meticulously placing numbers in the correct column?

Do you pay careful attention to details when you're in a hurry to finish your arithmetic assignment?

Do you work meticulously when you build model airplanes?

Do you work meticulously when you wash dishes?

Do you work meticulously when you make your beds?

In designing the vocabulary lessons, a deliberate attempt is made to expand concepts associated with the scripts' lexicon and grammar and at the same time to develop skill in retrieving stored verbal symbols. While working on concepts associated with the lexicon, students repeat definitions which frequently involve stringing seventeen or twenty words together in a meaningful way. They also deal with varing inflectional forms of the same word (e.g. gesturing, gestured, gestures, gesture).

The sequence for teaching students to read printed symbols for the concepts follows:

1) Words are introduced verbally in context after a segment of the episode is viewed.

2) The teacher provides word meanings. She models and leads responses before testing to see if individual students can store and retrieve precise definitions. (Students are also asked to supply the verbal symbols for concepts when definitions are given.)

3) The video portion of the tapes or concrete examples of concepts are supplied to imprint visual associations with auditory presentations of concepts.

4) When testing shows mastery at the auditory level students are ready to read the words.

5) As the teacher writes the printed symbol for a concept, she identifies the concept, and asks the students to retrieve stored verbal associations with the concept.

The teacher does this for each new concept the students will meet when they read the TV script.

The facility with which our disabled readers are able to identify words when they meet them in the scripts lends support to deHirsch's speculation that "verbalization stabilizes perception." (10,p.471)

In addition to helping students develop language skills, it appears that commercial TV tapes when used in conjunction with the actual scripts, provide an external organization of the very complex process of reading. The script's spatial arrangements of sound sequences are translated into visual representations. The process of visualization -- the process so important to recall and thus to all levels of comprehension -- is a built-in process: it is not left to chance or to the limited number of illustrations found in texts.

TV tapes and scripts also lend themselves to the development of all the comprehension skills, usually taught in basal reading programs. Group decisions can be made about: the relationship of details to the Main Idea, the Sequence of Events, Implications, Comparisons and Contrasts, Character Traits, Outcomes, etc. It has been our practice to concentrate on one skill with each segment, developing the thinking skills associated with the specific comprehension skill, on an auditory-vocal level before providing individualized visual-motor practices.

Post testing of our fifth, seventh, eighth and ninth-grade programs began at the end of April. A pilot study of the impact of the program on the reading behavior of seventh-graders was done after they had worked in TV Reading for five months. The results encouraged us to expand the program and to compete for a federal grant to install an on-the-job training program for secondary teachers.

TV READING
Analysis of Reading Scores
Seventh-Grade Students
February 1974 to June 1974

STUDENT NO.	SRA 9/73	SRA 6/74	DIFF.	STUDENT NO.	SRA 9/73	SRA 6/74	DIFF.
1	6.2	9.7	+3.5	15	5.4	7.7	+2.3
2	4.4	7.7	+3.3	16	4.3	6.7	+2.4
3	4.8	6.9	+2.1	17	3.4	2.1	-1.3
4	6.1	7.5	+1.4	18	3.4	3.9	+0.5
5	5.2	7.7	+2.5	19	8.3	10.7	+2.4
6	2.1	6.4	+4.3	20	3.2	6.5	+3.3
7	3.6	5.6	+2.0	21	7.2	9.1	+1.9
8	3.9	7.1	+3.2	22	2.7	3.9	+1.2
9	3.1	5.8	+2.7	23	4.6	3.9	-0.7
10	6.8	8.1	+1.2	24	5.2	6.9	+1.7
11	6.6	8.6	+2.0	25	3.9	6.5	+2.6
12	8.7	3.9	-4.8	26	5.2	2.1	-3.1
13	6.3	7.2	+0.9	27	4.9	5.1	+0.2
14	5.1	6.9	+1.8	28	3.6	6.5	+2.9

N = 28	%	Gains in Years
1	3.6	4
4	14.3	3
10	35.7	2
6	21.4	1
3	10.7	Less than 1
4	14.3	Loss

N = 28

Pre.	Estimated Post	Actual Post	Difference btn. means	Sem.	t
4.9	5.5	6.5	1.00	.30	3.35*

* $p < .01$

In all TV Reading classes, whether in Philadelphia or Mount Vernon, the impact of commercial TV on student motivation is very apparent. Hyperactivity, distractibility, volatility -- the behaviors associated with low-performing students -- do not surface, even though actual viewing time is very limited. Students attend to and participate in all the activities associated with the program: learning vocabulary, dramatizing scripts, role playing, working on practice exercises, writing original compositions. Commercial TV tapes and scripts provide the means for shifting our method from visual-motor to auditory-vocal. They build in the visualization process. They provide a common experience for the teaching of comprehension skills, and they motivate students to get the practice necessary for mastery of skills. In Mount Vernon TV Reading has given us hope for reversing the tendency for upper elementary and secondary students to accumulate deficits.

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